(d) whether this fact was discussed with the Pakistan Delegation during the meeting of Indo Pak Officers;

(e) if so, the outcome of the discussion; and

(f) if not, what steps are being taken by the Government for the early release of the Indian prisoners?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) to (f) According to available information, 54 Indian Prisoners of War (POWs) are believed to be in the custody of Pakistan. Pakistan has consistently maintained that no Indian POWs are in its custody.

Government have extended to the families of the 54 Indian POWs believed to be in Pakistan's custody liberalised family pension, family gratuity and education allowance for children.

The matter has been taken up on several occasiosn with Pakistan at various levels, including that of Prime Minister. During his visit to Pakistan from 20-21 February, 1999, Prime Minister raised this issue with the Prime Minister of Pakistan and the two sides appointed a 2 member committee at Ministerial level to examine humanitarian issues, including that of the missing POWs.

The matter was also raised in the official level discussions held with Pakistan on March 5-6, 1999. The Pakistani side stated that there were no Indian POWs in its custody, but agreed to re-examine the matter afresh.

Government would continue to purposefully pursue this matter with Pakistan.

Delhi quota for Haj Pilgrims

326. SHRI AMAR SINGH:
SHRIMATI JAYAPRADA NAHATA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Central Haj Committee has decided to reduce Haj Pilgrim's quota from Delhi;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof and the reasons therefor; and

(c) whether Govt. had received any representation from the Chairman, Delhi State Haj Committee in this regard and if so, the details thereof and the action taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) No representation has been received by the Government from the Chairman, Delhi State Haj Committee.